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AUTHOR Pereira, Peter
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ABSTRACT

Of all the uncertain problems which curriculum theorists encounter, teaching curriculum to graduate students is among the most problematic. On the one hand is the mass of knowledge and concepts about curriculum. On the other hand is the student who, more often than not, has limited experience in putting abstract ideas to practical use. If the knowledge and concepts are emphasized, the student may not understand how to make use of them. A typical graduate level curriculum course has classroom teachers, curriculum specialists, and researchers with their own particular problems in curriculum. The students need to be taught to think about their problems without getting bogged down. An approach to teaching an introductory curriculum course which takes advantage of the diversity of the students in the class and does not postpone engagement with curriculum problems involves a collaborative mode of discussion and moves from an atmosphere of permissiveness towards discipline and structure. The three phases of the course are: (1) diversity, which introduces the diverse situations in which students work and tries to put this diversity to work; (2) commonality, in which students consider a common problem situation which is introduced by the instructor; and (3) consolidation, in which students reflect on what has taken place and go back to work, individually or in small groups, on their own problem situations. (CJ)

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CURRICULUM STUDENTS AND THEIR DISCONTENTS

Peter Pereira
DePaul University
2323 N. Seminary Ave.
Chicago, IL 60614

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Introduction to the Problem

Of all the uncertain problems which curriculum theorists encounter, teaching curriculum to graduate students is among the most problematic. On the one hand, lies the mass of knowledge and concepts about curriculum (much of which can be found in popular texts on curriculum planning) that we feel students ought to know. On the other sits the student who, more often than not, has limited experience in putting abstract ideas to practical use. If we emphasize the knowledge and concepts, students may not see how to make use of them. Worse, students may misunderstand their uses or dismiss them as irrelevant. If we emphasize the process of using knowledge about curriculum we quickly become enmeshed in real and primary curriculum problems. Inevitably, this is a messy business; so messy, in fact, that both the process and the knowledge easily get obscured. Somehow, we must find a way to involve students in thinking about curriculum problems and yet preserve enough distance so that appropriate content is mastered.

There is a type of student for whom the difficulties are especially poignant. Let me characterize this class of students because they can be found in many institutions. They are near the beginning of their work on a master's degree and are taking a first course in curriculum. They are practicing professionals (classroom teachers, curriculum specialists, school administrators) who are engaged in part-time study (either in the summer or on evenings and weekends). For the most part, they are competent and serious about what they do although their thinking often appears superficial, intuitive, or unsystematic. They are pursuing graduate study for a number of reasons (including professional advancement as well as a desire for improved understanding), but most do not expect graduate study to be immediately useful to them in their pro-

fessional work. Yet, they would like their coursework to help them cope more effectively with their difficulties, difficulties which frequently are pressing and severe. Add to all this the fact that most do not plan to move into situations with significantly different difficulties or to pursue graduate work beyond the master's degree, and you can see why I call the situation poignant. They need, and yearn for, something of practical value from curriculum courses but usually never find it.

The situation so far described might not seem problematic; at least the problems and solutions might seem quite simple. Three alternative formulations which may represent typical approaches to an introductory curriculum course come to mind. If students need and yearn for useful ideas, start with material they feel is immediately useful; save the more abstract, and complex material for later. If students lack intellectual skills, force them to probe issues in more depth and more methodically. For example, one could present dichotomous positions on important issues and expect students to support one side or the other; or, better yet, both sides of the issue. If beginning students lack necessary background knowledge, start by providing this knowledge, perhaps in the form of lectures and readings; then make it clear how the knowledge should be put to use.

Each of these suggestions has merit and may have a place somewhere in a graduate curriculum program. But each postpones engagement with curriculum problems. There would be no harm in this if students understood <u>how</u> their ideas, intellectual skills, or background knowledge could be used to think about curriculum problems. But in fact, these students are confused on this point and many doubt the value of abstract ideas. They have enough personal experience to know that theoretical principles do not apply unequivocally to practice. Occasionally they may climb on a bandwagon and give vocal support to some per-

suasive slogan; but when it comes to the crunch, most of them pay close attention to their particular situations and modify their behavior as a result. Consequently, they are quick to dismiss theory as irrelevant or useless, which for them it has been. Instead, they crave sets of rules, routines, or algorithms to tell them what to do, and many quite clearly feel that such things ought to be provided. It is a curious paradox that, having dismissed theory, they still seek universals to guide their practice.

How should we procede when the kinds of ideas students crave do not exist? Curriculum problems cannot be resolved merely by applying suitable procedures; and there is no point in pandering to students' misconceptions by pretending otherwise. We could, perhaps, try to seduce them with a few well chosen techniques which all students could easily adapt to their situations. If we encouraged reflection on these techniques and ways they could be modified and extended, we might gradually stretch and diversify students' thinking and show them how to think seriously about curriculum problems.

There is a lot to be said for this approach. For one thing, it recognizes the importance of early involvement with genuine curriculum problems. For another, it provides a vehicle for promoting this involvement. Deliberating about curriculum problems is an activity which must be learned by engaging in it. Postponing this engagement until prerequisite skills or knowledge were learned would only perpetuate the confusions and distrust of these students. Not only would they misunderstand what we were doing, there is a serious risk that we might misrepresent the way in which curriculum problems should be formulated and resolved. Not to mention the possibility that we would become so enamoured of the alleged prerequisites that engagement with real and primary problems would be left for students to do entirely on their own.

But the seductive approach is difficult to pull off in introductory

curriculum courses which include a diverse group of students with diverse problems. Every class usually has a mixture of teachers from early grades into college who teach a variety of subjects. They come from a wide variety of schools, private and public, urban and suburban, large and small. Some students have 20 or more years of experience, some only two or three. Some are subject specialists, some are grade-level teachers, and some are curriculum developers for special purpose organizations such as the Heart Association. Some are administrators who tend to have their own unique view of curriulum problems. Given this diversity, it is a real tour de force if one can find techniques which everyone can readily adapt.

Yet there is a way to turn this diversity into a positive resource. Significant curriculum problems can be found in the situations in which students work. After all, curriculum problems grow out of the particulars of situations in which decisions must be made; these students are well acquainted with situations which require them to make decisions; so why not ask them to locate the problems in these situations? Then, to the extent that viable solutions are found and justified, they will see that the activity has potential pay off for them. As we shall see, the diverse background of these students can be of great help in the process, provided we can put it to use.

Before we take a closer look at the details of this process, there is one more characteristic of these students which can cause difficulties if it is not recognized. They have a strong sense of themselves as teachers and professsionals. And quite deservedly so. In most cases they are competent in their work, concerned about their students, and are coping reasonably effectively with difficult situations. Consequently, they are naturally sensitive if their thinking is not treated with respect; particularly when the apparent disrespect comes from an instructor who may be unfamiliar with their situations.

Add to this, their doubts about the applicability of graduate courses and you can see why it is extremely important not to start a course by appearing to attack them.

To summarize, we want to teach students to think about their own curriculum problems without getting bogged down. We must avoid misrepresenting the complexity of the process, and, at the same time, there must be some productive outcome for students. We want to stretch and diversify their thinking, but avoid the appearance of treating them as ignorant or deficient. To help us, we do have three important resources. We can honor and use their knowledge of their own circumstances. We can appeal to their affection for themselves as helpers and teachers; they really do want to improve what they are doing. And, collectively, they have a great deal of diverse experience which, if organized, could be brought to bear upon the problems in their situations.

An Approach to the Problem

This section describes an approach to teaching an introductory curriculum course which takes account of the students in the class and does not postpone engagement with curriculum problems. This approach has been developed over a number of years and seems to help these students understand the complexities of disciplined consideration of real and primary problems. At its best, students learn to think more effectively about their own and others' problems; they also come to value the need for systematic deliberation. To the extent that the rest of their graduate work builds on this beginning, they become more adept and professional educators.

The central feature of this approach is a collaborative mode of discussion. Without discussion, there would be no primary material with which to work; or at least no material which was both real and problematic to someone in the class. Discussion also helps because students are often more clear headed about other people's problem situations than their own. They can do for each other what they cannot do for themselves. In this way, discussion provides another sort of material for the course. The way in which different people approach the same situation becomes the subject of reflective thought. Thus students not only become aware of diversity but begin to see what diversity can do for them.

The movement of the course is from permissiveness towards discipline and structure. The instructor starts by being invitational and non-judgemental. Probing and puzzling questions may be asked, but responses are generally accepted. A line of questioning should not be pushed so hard that a student feels under attack or so long that others feel concerned about what will happen to them.

This permissiveness is not merely a device to seduce students into the activity. It correctly honors their professional competence and allows the instructor to diagnose their states of mind and character. Structure develops as he puts his diagnoses to use.

There are three phases to the course. First, there is a phase of diversity which introduces the diverse situations in which students work and tries to put this diversity to work. This is followed by a phase of commonality in which students consider a common problem situation which is introduced by the instructor. Third is the phase of consolidation in which students reflect on what has taken place and go back to work, individually or in smaller groups, on their own problem situations. Since the first phase is the most critical and involves the most discussion, it will be described in the most detail.

Phase of Diversity

Although this phase is the most critical, it is the easiest to rush over if sufficient time is not allowed. It is time consuming, and thus may appear to be inefficient. But it is important to lay the proper groundwork and not gloss over things that might get in the way later. Each student must make a contribution and reflect on others' contributions. The instructor must learn some things about each student and begin the process of stretching and diversifying their thinking. Above all, it must be made clear that this is a collaborative activity quite different from what students might expect. Time spent expanding ideas and developing habits will pay dividends in later phases of the course.

This phase is described in three steps all of which need to be worked through. But the process is more fluid than the descriptions make it appear. Backtracking is a characteristic feature of curriculum deliberation. So, for example, when problems are being formulated, we may have to take another look at the details of the situation or what bothers us. One also finds oneself at dif-

ferent steps of the process with different students. Some resist and some forge ahead. Their natural differences in pace and inclination need to be respected. If an opportunity to work ahead with one student is pursued, it provides a model for other students to follow.

Introducing Problematic Situations

The first step in the type of introductory curriculum course being described is to introduce ourselves to each other and to the situations in which problems will be located. Students and teacher will be collaborating to discriminate problems, so we must all become familiar with everyone's situation. We must also develop those habits of listening and responding which will foster genuine collaboration. Such habits do not develop spontaneously but must be carefully nurtured. This process seems to work best when each person can talk about something he or she knows well and about which the rest are relatively ignorant. Thus the first question which each student must address is an open-ended one: "Can you describe the situation in which you work?"

An answer to this question can be obtained from each student in a quick circuit around the table. Students usually expect instructors to do something like this near the beginning of the course, and there is no reason to make the first round seem like something out of the ordinary. It provides a quick survey of the kinds of students in the course and a preliminary idea about who is timid and who aggressive. But in many courses these introductions are merely good manners or a device to win students' confidence. If, as usually happens, the instructor quickly goes on to the subject matter of the course, students know that their background and problems are likely to be ignored; or worse, they may suspect the information gleaned will eventually be used against them. To the extent these suspicions are present, students will try to avoid going into de-

tail about their work.

This course should operate differently. For one thing, it takes time to develop collaborative habits. For another, students' background and problems are the the subject matter of this phase of the course; so details about both must be clarified and developed. Those students who were most open and descriptive in the first round should be invited to go into more detail. If a student seems prone to avoid some kinds of details, information about these can be requested. The tone, however, is still permissive. If gentle probing does not accomplish its purpose, wait; there will be time enough later for more disciplined work. After a model has been provided with a few students, others should be urged to join in the questioning. In this way, students' sensibilities about themselves can be turned to advantage. Each becomes the expert on his or her own situation. The rest of us are ignorant but curious. Say, for example, a student describes her seventh grade science class. Much as we may know, or think we know, about how science should be taught or about the students in her all-white parochial school, we must attend to the details of her account. We can and should request additional details which our experience and judgement suggest are relevant; but for the time being we all must accept her version of what is going on. The upshot of this fairly lengthy step is that each student and the instructor have some knowledge, and some notes, on every students' situation.

There is a third reason why we should take time to develop students' responses to the question. This has to do with the direction we have in mind and the way we hope to pursue it. Students vary in the kinds of things they report and in the terms they use to talk about their situations. We all are limited by our predispositions, and these students are no exception. So it is not surprising when we find that most only report on a limited range of detail and often use, or misuse, a limited vocabulary. One of the purposes of the course is to help students transcend their limitations. But more than this, we want to show them

how to do this for themselves and to convince them that, in the long run, it will help. Then there is a chance that they will be both willing and able to continue on their own.

This is an ambitious and complex undertaking. If we are to ahve any hope of sucess, we must start at once. Not by bluntly pointing out their limitations. This would be too offensive for these students and besides would miss the point. The instructor should not be telling them what they should think about or the terms they should be using so much as providing a model of how everyone's thinking about a particular situation can be expanded so as to give additional insight. So, for example, if a secondary math teacher reports how well students do on national tests, how much they are able to cover in one year, and how many students complete a year of calculus at a neighboring university, this is impressive. We might even want to know how they do it. But we also should be sure to ask him about things he is not talking about; for example, about the kinds of communities the school serves; about the way the curriculum is organized outside of honors classes and outside of math; about how students feel about math and what they do in their free time; or about the way he and other teachers feel about teaching in that school. It is hard to say what he is not reporting that will eventually turn out to be significant, but our questions should at least include material from each of the four common components (milieux, subject matter, students, and teachers). He may not have much to say about some of these, but it is surprising how quickly other students pick up this line of questioning and begin to chip away at his habitual orientation. There is likely to be someone in the class for whom math is frightening and who worries about what can happen to students who do not suceed in such a school. This person will not need much encouragement to ask the math teacher some pertinent questions.

One non-productive thing can happen at this point. For most students, descriptions quickly become judgements about quality, about what the problem "really" is, or about what should be done. We must make clear that at this point we are trying to stick to descriptions insofar as we can. Debates about what the math teacher should do or be concerned about must be discouraged. At the same time, it is possible to point out to students that a wide array of questions for more detail are appropriate and that these questions can help to test our tentative hypotheses. We can also ask them to reflect on what has, or has not, been said. Reflection on the process that has taken place will be of specific concern in the third phase of the course, but its beginnings can be encouraged now.

A second obstacle to keep in mind is due to the number and variety of situations being discussed. Diversity has its uses, but it also means that students have a lot to keep in mind. At first they like the practical focus of the course, but some get tired and begin to wonder what all this detail will do for them. A few seem so wrapped up in their own details that it is hard for them to focus on others' situations. The instructor must be aware of students' degree of fatigue, keep the flow going, yet make sure that contributions are heard and understood. To do this, it helps to have students write up their descriptions overnight. This material then gets distributed to all so that the next class does not go over the same ground.

Confronting Discontents

The next step in our introductory curriculum course is to get students to focus on their own curriculum problems. But how are we to go about it? The significant problems embedded in educational situations are seldom obvious or easy to find. They evolve from a more or less intimate knowledge of the details of the situation and a sense that the situation is not functioning properly. Without this sense of dissatisfaction, the situation would not be problematic and there would be no further reason to deliberate about it. To come to grips with their own curriculum problems our students need to focus on their discontents, those things that tell them that something is wrong or at least not going as well as they think it ought. Perhaps reading scores are below the norm or not as far above the norm as desired; perhaps students exhibit signs of misunderstanding; perhaps the teacher feels bored or disinterested; perhaps parents or administrators have complaints. Whatever the situation, for everyone the starting point involves discovering and examining their discontents. Thus, the next discussion question which each student must answer is, "What bothers you about your situation?"

Right away, we run into an obstacle. Imagine what happens when a curriculum student is asked, "What is bothering you about your school?"; or, more bluntly, "What is going wrong in your classroom?" It is an unfamiliar form of question, impolite in ordinary conversation, because it clearly implies that something <u>is</u> wrong, an implication which most students do not readily accept. Many immediately misunderstand the question's intent. They may see the questioner as "negative" or "unsympathetic"; they may interpret the question as a personal attack and defend themselves accordingly; or they may view it as a not so subtle attempt to prepare the ground for purveying a favor-

ite theory or pet procedure. Nevertheless, it is worth persevering with the question, not only because it is the question that needs examination but also because it marks this activity as something out of the ordinary. Up to this point, we have listened and have avoided making students feel uncomfortable. Now we have embarked on a harder task and must call upon whatever good will was generated in the first step. With a little patience and reassurance, the obstacle can be overcome. For the most part, these students are concerned about themselves as teachers and would like to do their students some good. So if one appeals to this feeling, admits the contentious nature of the question, and respects their responses, most teachers can soon be led to see the question as an invitation to think seriously about their own classrooms. Those who cannot will be treated later.

With the first obstacle surmounted, others present themselves. People vary in the kinds of things which trouble them and in their sensitivity to what is troubling in a situation. Some students seem to have a great deal of experience in ignoring the problematic character of their situations. Those who feel discontented still may have trouble articulating what is bothering them. And no wonder. It is not an easy thing to do. Moreover, they have no training in focusing on their discontents and using them productively. Therefore, it is worth taking the time at this point to make sure that each student develops an adequate list of symptoms that indicate his or her situation is problematic.

Once students begin to articulate their discontents, they usually do so in two non-productive ways. First, statements are likely to be made in normative terms which do little to pinpoint what the difficulty is. A math teacher, for example, is troubled because students have "poor attitude towards school, poor attutude towards mathematics, and lack of motivation." This cer-

tainly looks like trouble, but this teacher must develop this response. She needs to focus on those things which tell her that attitudes and motivation are poor rather than merely labeling her malaise. Otherwise she inevitably will have difficulty in discriminating significant problems in her situation.

A second failing in the way students articulate discontents arises from the difficulty of disentangling discontents from presumed causes and preferred solutions. Many responses lump these all together, perhaps not all in one breath but at least by implication. Poor attitudes become the cause of the discontent as well as a label for it; as a result, the solution "obviously" involves a change in attitude. Or, to take a more graphic example, a geography teacher says, "I really am bothered that my students do not retain the basic information I teach at the beginning the the course because I can't go on to cover the units on world regions." Notice how the discontent, which involves his discomfort at not being able to cover the interesting material on world regions, is intertwined with a preliminary problem formulation. Further, the way has been pointed towards a solution; this student wants to devise a faster way of getting through the basics. He needs to be sensitized to a broader range of troubling features in his situation so that later he will have alternatives to weigh and choose.

It is not easy to disturb the linearity of such thinking. We have already acknowledged the student as the expert on his own situation, and we must respect this. But there are other experts around the table, some of whom are ready and willing to help him think about his situation. It is at this point that the diagnostic information gathered in the first step comes into play. The geography teacher is neither too timid nor too aggressive. He really is bothered and is willing to focus on his situation with the help of others. But he has a marked tendency to focus exclusively on subject matter issues.

When asked to comment on the milieux in which he teaches, he says, "It seems very obvious that the community, the administration, and the rest of the faculty have little, if any, influence in this matter." Perhaps there is another student, a fifth grade teacher for example, who is overburdened with discontents and who seems more sensitve to how milieux can interact with what goes on the classroom. This student can be invited to comment on the geography teacher's statement, thus helping him to locate a wider array of discontents. Later, the geography teacher can help the fifth grade teacher sort out her confused array of discontents. One teacher needs to expand discontents, the other to organize them. Both need to separate their discontents from their habitual assumptions about causes and solutions.

Conducting this kind of discussion is not easy. The trick lies in the way students are directed to work with each other. It will already be clear from the first step who are the most docile and who can focus on others' situations. Start by inviting these students to be the principals in the discussion. The habitual orientation of students towards the common components may also be known as well as the terms normally used to talk about these components. As with the geography teacher and the fifth grade teacher, contrasting orientations and terms can be played against each other. In this way, students become aware of their own stereotypes and prejudices, not because the instructor points it out to them but because they see that other professionals view their situations in different ways.

To foster this kind of collaboration, it helps to use four categories to characterize students. The geography teacher could be described as <u>narrow minded</u> because he avoids significant factors in the situation. He clearly feels they are beyond his control and therefore not worth bothering about. Other students tend to focus on those things they have decided are beyond their

control. These students can be described as overwhelmed because they report a confused array of discontents that they can do nothing about. Then there are those who seem unaware of any discontents, the oblivious. A surprising number of apparently competent people seem to have reached an accommodation with their situation and thus fall into this category. Finally, there are the defensive, those few whom we did not win over in the early going.

Although these categories overlap and students may shift from one to another, they can help an instructor work through this step in the discussion. The overwhelmed work well on other people's discontents. They can open the eyes of the oblivious and expand the vision of the narrow minded because they are aware of so many potential discontents. They help to point out details not mentioned and suggest further things to think about. At the same time, the narrow minded can help the overwhelmed organize their discontents. Their characteristic linear thinking encourages the overwhelmed to think about one discontent at a time instead of skipping from one to another. After enough models have been provided, the defensive usually, but not always, begin to articulate their own discontents. In this way, each student ends up with a reasonably comprehensive list of indicators that his or her situation is problematic.

Discriminating Problems

The last step in this phase of the course requires students to translate their indicators of discontent into a set of discriminated problems. They need to consider their reasons for being discontented, not just their habitual reasons but ones they may not have thought about before. Perhaps the indicators of discontent already organize the problems for them; or maybe they are only symptoms of an underlying problem, or problems, which need formulation. For instance, does the geography teacher need to teach the basics more effectively? Or

does he need to change his point of view on what is basic? The calculus teacher thinks he wants to find a way to teach more calculus to more students, but the indicators he listed may be symptomatic of a more serious problem. The seventh grade science teacher is worried because her students do not do well in science. Perhaps her difficulties reflect an underlying school or social problem which needs treatment instead of, or in addition to, the way she teaches science. Thus, the third discussion question each student must consider is, "What are the sources of your discontents?"

As with the first two questions, we run into difficulties right away. Locating problems in a situation is not as simple as it appears to most students. Otherwise we would not have spent so much time describing details and discontents. It is characteristic of any educational situation that different people have widely different perceptions of what "the" problem really is. This class should be no exception. The diverse background of these students, as well as the preceding discussion, makes it likely that they will have assigned different meanings to the details of a situation and grouped these details to shape different formulations of what is "the" problem embedded in the situation.

These differences can be played against each other in much the same way they were in the first two steps of this phase. The narrow minded will focus on single causes with built in solutions. They must be brought to understand that their discontents stem from a variety of sources and that consideration of solutions should be postponed. The overwhelmed can only see a situation and details but cannot assign the details to a problem. They need to focus on some likely causes, possibly the same kind preferred by one of the narrow minded. Again, the vices of one type can be put to work to benefit the other. By this time, most of the oblivious and defensive have joined one group or the other. The instructor can help the discussion along by directing traffic, but

if a collaborative atmosphere has developed, his role is less intrusive in this step. He does need to use the four components to focus attention on sources of difficulty which are being overlooked and to warn against exclusive or one-sided assignment of meanings. But this can usually be done in reflective moments which follow bursts of student interaction.

It must be kept in mind that the goal of this step is to formulate more than one problem, usually at least three problems. Considering three competing problems avoids an either-or mentality and can lead to a fourth problem formulation which combines the most salient and compatible features of the three. Some students resist the idea that there should be more than one problem in any situation, but most eventually make creative use of their discontents. They thus turn a problematic situation into a "situation of problems."

Phase of Commonality

By the time each student has written out at least three problem formulations, most students are beginning to wonder if this activity will ever have any practical benfits. They thought they knew about their situations, but they have seen that there are other ways of looking at it. Where they may have been unaware of what was troubling them, they now have a whole list of indicators of trouble each one of which may be worrisome. And now we have loaded them up with a whole set of discriminated problems which may appear to defy solution. We certainly have complicated their lives, and so far there has been no pay off. In fact, if we are honest with them, we must admit the resolution of their problem is still a long way off. It is understandable that they have doubts about the benefits of complexity.

Somehow we must enable them to experience the practical benefits of systematically complicating problematic situations. Our consideration of their diverse problems has been diffuse, and they are likely to be fatigued with this activity as well as worried by it. We need now to focus their attention on a single problem and work our way through it until defensible solutions are found. Better yet, if someone else has already deliberated on the situation and if a solution has already been found and implemented, some outcomes will be known. These solutions and outcomes can then be checked against the proposed solutions and their justifications. In this way, students would get an inside view of deliberation in a relatively short space of time. They then could return to their own situations of problems with renewed energy and confidence that they are engaged in a worthwhile activity.

What we need to do, then, is to provide students with material which describes an educational situation. Of course, we would like this material to have well-chosen similarities and differences with students' own situations. But in actual practice one uses what is available. Students are then invited to go to work on this material just as they have with their own. Ideally, one of the people who participated in the original deliberation, a colleague or former student perhaps, is brought in to contribute additional material or answer questions. He can also point the way by bringing up troubling features of the situation, suggesting sources of difficulty, and even discussing solutions which may have been tried and found wanting. It is exciting to see a class of students take up the trail and try to follow the course of the original deliberation. They know that someone has gone before and that there is an eventual outcome. Most enjoy the challenge of anticipating that outcome or even improving upon it.

Phase of Consolidation

During the phase of commonality, the instructor should have been making notes on how well students are able to connect their earlier experience of problem discrimination and collaboration with the common problem situation. Some students persist in their habitual orientations. If, for example, the common problem has to do with teaching literature to students who are labelled "disadvantaged", the geography teacher will probably still be worried about the basics. But students also show signs of growth; the geography teacher may be able to use an expanded idea of what is basic to think about the problems of teaching literature. Students who started the course by being defensive and uninvolved may now be the best at collaborative activity. These signs of growth should be noted so that students understand the progress they have made and how it helped them work through the common situation. Where particular habits seemed to hinder progress, these also should be mentioned. Unless students reflect on what has transpired, they will not realize the full benefits of what they have done.

It is also worth reflecting on the later stages of the deliberative process: how a specific problem was chosen as the problem to be resolved; how alternative resolutions were devised, rehearsed, and revised; and how pet solutions and early foreclosure of deliberation were avoided. Not only will this increase students' capacity for reflection, it describes the steps they will have to go through to complete the work on their own problem formulations.

Much of this work will have to take place individually or in smaller groups if each student is to complete it before the end of the course. But if the discussion carried through in the first and second phases of the course has served its purpose, students can develop a reasonably comprehensive plan of action to cope with their discontents. Of course, they may have new discontents

to plague them once they have carried out their plan. But these then could become the stimulus for further deliberation and action.

Keep in mind that this is a first course in curriculum for a particular type of student. No claim is being made that it will turn students into experts on curriculum development. It is intended to provide a model for curriculum deliberation, to initiate them into the process, and to persuade them of the value of this mode of inquiry. The pattern of thinking is essentially a systematic method of discriminating an adequate variety of alternatives; alternative perceptions of problematic situations, alternative formulations of the problems, and alternative resolutions of the problems. They will certainly need further coursework to expand their repertoire of alternatives, to develop their intellectual skills, and to provide them with background knowledge. But to the extent they understand and value the uses of alternatives, skills, and knowledge, the rest of their graduate program will make sense to them.